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The moon is a great thief. He always steals something, cows in particular. Once the men got angry and wanted to kill him. The sun said, »I don't wish you to kill my friend but if you do I will go away.» The men were afraid and they let the moon eat the cows.

The moon had sexual intercourse with a woman. That is why women menstruate. From the intercourse of the moon with that woman a boy and girl were born. They were the first people.

If a woman dreams about an old man she will find that she is menstruating when she wakens. Her soul has had intercourse with the moon who is very old and looks like an old man. Each month when a woman is about to menstruate, she dreams about that old man.

## 9. Sun and Moon (Pedro)

The sun and the moon are friends. The sun helps and protects the moon. If anybody wants to kill the moon, the sun says, »He is my friend, I will kill you.» The sun went off to catch lice. He found white lice and gave some of them to the moon. The moon was not satisfied with these lice and said. »I am an expert in catching lice.» He went off, but he did'nt return. The sun said, »What is the matter with the moon?» He went to look for him. He found the moon very ill. One of the lice the moon had caught had bored a big hole in his head. The sun brought a comb, dressed his hair and the moon was well again. (VIII, p. 97).[1]

## 10. Why the Moon is Yellow (Pedro)

The sun wanted spears. He dived into a river and changed himself into a big yellow fish (*atsa*).[2] When the Indians saw this fish they tried to kill him with spears. The back of the

[1] Roman figures refer to the notes beginning on on p. 90.

[2] A *dorado* fish.

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of the dead the *āhat* hunts, gathers fruit and goes fishing for food. When he arrives at the abode of the dead, his people come to meet him and they take him to their house.

6) The dead inhabit a region of their own situated under the one we live in. When it is daylight here it is dark in their region.

The *āhat* sleep during the day and at night search for food. They feed on dead animals and fish. Their life is exactly the same as that of living persons. They have underground fields and lagoons. They cultivate the earth the same as we do, raise animals and go fishing.

The *āhat* fight each other like the living Bolivians and Paraguayans do. The spirits of the Matako are at war with those of the Toba.

7) A dead person is called an *āhat*. The *āhat* live in the bush and appear only at night. We do not know exactly what they do in the bush nor what they eat. Some of them may be good. The medicine-men may talk with them and learn what is going to happen. For instance, they predict disease and future death.

8) When a man sees an *āhat* he will die unless he is a medicine-man. When a person is dying an *āhat* comes and steals his fire.

9) When the north wind blows very hard, the *āhat* leave their abode and walk about the earth looking for uninhabited places. If they see a man they vanish under the earth, but sometimes they are seen from afar. Frequently the *āhat* transform themselves into the north wind, which brings storms.

10) If you dream that you are visiting the land of the *āhat* and one of them invites you to eat, you must refuse. If you accept you may die during the following year.

## II. The Medicine-men and the Big Fire

A medicine-man may call on the Big Fire at the end of the world. On the journey he crosses first a rainy area and then he comes to a dark zone where it is impossible to see.

156 The medicine-men who have snuffed the powder of *sebil* seeds (*natax*) and gone into a trance, see everything, especially the disease demons. They also see bad medicine-men. When in this state they may also call on the spirits of the dead (*āhat*). Such visits to the dead may sometimes help to cure a patient, for if it is the spirit of a dead person who caused the sickness, he can also take it away. A medicine-man has to pay the disease demon when he cures somebody and so he in turn charges the patient. The fees of a medicine-man are extremely high. My informant Pedro, for instance, has paid a poncho (value of 18 pesos) for being cured of snake bite. If the patient dies, the medicine-man is not entitled to a fee, even a very small one. However, his professional fame is not lessened.

If a medicine-man has not succeeded in effecting a cure, another one is called in, but then the task is more difficult as the disease has lost its temper. It is also important to call the right specialist. Certain doctors have acquired fame for curing particular diseases. Snake bites are usually treated by special medicine-men.

756 When medicine-men perform magical rites, a very big
●787 tree covered with green leaves, similar to those of a palm
761 tree and also extremely thick, appears before them. This tree always emits a noise which only medicine-men perceive. If this same tree appears to the medicine-men without leaves and quite dry, it presages death for him. He then knows that he has only one year to live. Through magic the medicine-man knows when his last moment is near. He has only to let the tree come. When his time arrives the magic tree comes down from the sky, stops at a certain height above the ground near the medicine-man, who throws himself on the ground, and as soon as he has breathed his last the tree gets up and bursts »like a bomb«. It is the end for the medicine-man and the tree. The soul of the dead [775] medicine-man goes to the sky to the place where the tree had been.

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cine-man why he has come. He answers, »I came to have a talk, to call on you and become your friend.» They become friends.

## V. Origin of the Rio Bermejo

The Rio Bermejo is very deep for it was dug by a big *tatu careta* (giant armadillo) who wanted to go to the source of the river.

## VI. The New Moon

When there is a new moon, the Indians dance and beat on their drums (*pimpim*). The man who plays a drum wears a belt with hanging pendants of metal, hoofs and so on. They put water into the drum so that the hide will not get dry.

## VII. Menstruation

It is the moon who sleeps first with the girls and that is why they menstruate. When a young girl is menstruating for the first time, she must begin working and doing all she will have to do later on. If she does not keep active during this period, then she will be lazy all her life. She must be in semi-seclusion for five days, only going out with her father's permission. She may not marry or have sexual intercourse until after her first menstruation. When a woman is menstruating, she must not go to the bush where she could easily become frightened and die.

## VIII. Eclipses

An eclipse of the sun or moon foretells disease. When either the sun or moon becomes angry with men it covers itself. To have it uncover it is necessary to beat drums, shout, sing and to make all kinds of noise. When the sun is covered one may expect smallpox.

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## IX. Storms

821 When a storm approaches with rain and thunder, little children's ears are to be covered each time the thunder crashes, 761 otherwise Rain would take them under his arm and carry them away to his house. When such a thing happens, the child's body, which has remained on earth, becomes lean and white and all the food he takes is of no use. He visibly pines away, and it is not likely that a medicine-man can cure him. He will finally die without the cause of his death being known. The rain cannot do anything to grown-ups or big children, for it has not the strength to carry them away, [841] but it can harm menstruating women who happen to be out during a storm. Then they get very feeble.

## X. Shooting Stars

821 Shooting stars foretell the death of someone. Meteors are 781 stones thrown by the rain in order to fell the *quebracho*.

## XI. Treatment of Snake Bites

752 When a serpent bites a man, it goes into the wound and 825 climbs up in his body. When a man's foot is bitten by a-snake the leg must be pressed starting from the thigh, squeezing down to the place where he has been bitten. In so doing, the snake which has already had time to enter the leg, is obliged to go down into the big toe where it rolls itself up, tired. The operation lasts from evening to dawn and when the sun appears the snake gets cramped and vanishes under the ground. Once the snake is out the medicine-man has to suck the wound, for the departing snake has left its skin inside the body of the victim. The patient is completely cured only when the last piece of skin left by the snake has been removed. Otherwise he remains sick, has a headache and gets thinner and thinner.

If the progress of the snake inside the body cannot be stopped, the animal may go up into the head and blind the victim. It also goes to the heart and after repeated bites

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may kill him. The snake's *āhat* is called *punsoya* (perhaps Spanish-ponzoña : poison).

When a man is bitten by a snake he must kill the reptile and take it home in order to be cured rapidly. If he has been bitten while away from his home, he must dig a groove and put the snake into it, facing it in the opposite direction to that which he is taking. Thus the snake cannot enter him.

*Tawkxwax* taught the men the procedure to be followed in order to cure snake bites.

## XII. How to Become a Singer

Those who want to become good singers must go to the bush and stay there for quite a long time. They must kill birds who are good singers and eat them after they have been made into powder and mixed with blood extracted from the arm. When they are in the bush they must first beat a drum, then run. Thus they will perhaps dream about a singing bird. When they wake up they must then take their drums and sing the song they heard in their dreams. One must not awaken until the song is finished or he will not remember it. Everyone has two songs and he must sing them every day in order to learn them. Ordinarily several young men go to the bush and after they have dreamed of a song they sing one after another. Generally three or four days are sufficient to master a song.

One must not sing someone else's song. If after one has eaten a bird he dreams of an iguana, it is no longer worth while to go on, for he will never become a good singer. The birds one dreams about and who teach one how to sing are not ordinary birds, they are *paata* (supernatural beings). The women do not know how to sing but they can cry when they have to mourn. Not all women know how to weep. In order to weep well, a woman must dream about another woman who is a good mourner. There are some exceptional women who can sing.

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angry. No one is allowed to call on her and only very young boys may go into her house. She speaks only when it is necessary to get things she needs. 768

A medicine-woman of the village of Las Lomitas, whose husband died a year before, left her retreat in order to cure a sick child belonging to her family. After every treatment she went back to her hut. The child recovered in five days and she resumed her mourning. At no time did she speak with other members of her family. 756 768

In the morning and afternoon a widow plays a drum and weeps. Thus she tries to forget her husband but some time later she will think of him again and then go back to her drum. During this period she cuts her hair three times and eats her food with a fork and spoon. 765 [302 364]

If a woman looses her husband shortly after marriage, he may call on her frequently but if she marries another man before two years have elapsed the spirit of her late husband kills her new husband. After two years the dead man has forgotten his wife and marries a female spirit. When a widow dies her spirit goes to her husband and they live together as they did on earth. Upon the death of a husband the children are bound to support their mother unless she marries again after the two years of mourning. 775 768

## XX. Miscellanea

### a) *Dreams*

Dreams are of exceptional importance to the Matako who believe that everything which happens in dreams will come to pass in real life. The dream is the life of the soul which after death becomes a spirit. During sleep the soul is released to wander about in the world where it sees what will happen in material life. Ordinary men as well as medicine-men can identify images seen in dreams. Thus the Matako Indians expect to realize in life the accomplishment 787 ● [828]

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of their dreams. My informant, having dreamed that he was planting sugar-cane, intended to grow some.

Through the soul one knows what is going to happen. For instance, if one dreams that he shall be killed, it is likely that he is to die an unnatural death. If he is traveling about and dreams of home it is better to turn back. A man who is away from his wife can talk to her in the evening and she will see him in her dreams. It is the soul which walks about during the night. If one dreams of an algarroba or that he is working in a field, it means that he has still a long time to live. If during the absence of a member of the group someone dies, the absent one will dream about the dead person who appears to him naked. Generally when a traveler returns to his village there is no need to tell him of what has happened during his absence, for he is informed of everything through his dreams which occur when his soul returns to his family. Very often in dreams one sees dead relatives. The soul has gone to the underworld and paid them a visit. Sometimes the dead return by night to the houses of the living who then dream of the departed.

b) *Remedies*

The Indians call a certain fungus *āxǫ̀lĕut*. According to them it is the excrement of the fox which towards morning transforms itself into a fungus. It is used as a remedy for scalding. A fragment of the plant is toasted, powdered, mixed with fat and the white of an egg and spread on the burned place. The fat and the egg white are desirable but not indispensable ingredients for in a pinch the toasted powder is sufficient. This same plant sometimes obturates the penis of a sick person and prevents him from urinating. If when sucking the sick man the medicine-man gets out a fragment of this plant it most certainly means that the patient will recover. When the extremity of a limb aches it is to be tied at intervals of about half an

## Funeral Rites

763 If the eyes of a dying person become fixed in a stare, his soul cannot escape and his agony is prolonged. That is why the Matacos cover the faces of the dying with a piece of cloth and knot it about the throat. This cloth often contributes to accelerate the end by asphyxiating them. Their rush to bury the dead is so great that it sometimes results in the interment of persons who are still alive.

764 The widow, her head shaved, is isolated in a corner of the hut, separated from the rest of the room by a curtain, or else she is placed in a small annex attached to the hut.

[762] Immediately after the death of a young man who had committed suicide in the village of San Patricio, his mother crouched on the earth, placed the dead boy's head on her knees and began to grieve for him, saying repeatedly the word "yos," "yos" (my son, my son). The father beat a drum, day and night in accompaniment of a dirge in which the expression "yos," "yos," was much in evidence. A group of women, under the direction of the mother who was shaking a rattle [18] executed a dance which consisted of little jumpy steps near the place where the corpse had been placed before the burial.

587] A widower or a widow may marry again two or three months after their spouse's demise. The women excuse themselves by saying: "I had to eat, I need someone who will clothe me."

Burial up in a tree, as described by Enrique Palavecino, used at one time to be very common in the middle region of the Bemejo.

## Belief in the Reality of Dreams

● 787 842 The missionary Barbrooke Grubb has given numerous examples of the belief of the Lengua Indians in the reality of dreams. I have myself collected a good many examples of this belief among the Tobas and Pilagas. Here is an anecdote which illustrates this attitude among the Matacos. A girl from the village of San Patricio woke up weeping one beautiful morning. When asked about the cause of her sorrow, she answered that she had dreamed that she had had sexual relations with a young man and was afraid of becoming pregnant... (Footnote: Sent from the Smithsonian Institute of Washington by the author, a corresponding member. Translated from the French by Dr. Fernando Márquez Miranda, also a member).